NCA
VOC FOR PGM/FN
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JOHN BUE/PARIS

UNESCO CONFERENCE PREVIEW

ANNCR:

REPRESENTATIVES FROM ONE HUNDRED FORTY-FOUR NATIONS ARE PREPARING TO DEBATE A WIDE RANGE OF ISSUES AT THE TWENTIETH GENERAL CONFERENCE OF UNESCO, THE UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATION. THE CONFERENCE BEGINS NEXT TUESDAY (OCT. 24) IN PARIS, AND VOA'S JOHN BUE SENT THIS BACKGROUND REPORT.

VOICE:

THE TECHNICAL ASPECTS OF EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND CULTURE ARE BY DEFINITION TRANS-NATIONAL AND NON-POLITICAL. HUMAN RIGHTS AND THE STRUGGLE AGAINST RACISM ARE CONCEPTS WHICH NO ONE DARES TO DISPUTE, AT LEAST IN WORDS. BUT THROUGHOUT THE YEARS, ON THE INITIATIVE OF ITS MEMBERS, CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES HAVE WORKED THEIR WAY INTO UNESCO DEBATES. EXCAVATIONS IN JERUSALEM AND EDUCATION IN ISRAEL-OCCUPIED TERRITORIES WERE USED IN THE PAST TO BAR ISRAEL TEMPORARILY FROM EXERCISING ITS RIGHTS AS A UNESCO MEMBER AND THIS LED TO THE AMERICAN CONGRESS SUSPENDING, ALSO TEMPORARILY, THE PAYMENT OF U.S. DUES TO UNESCO.

ALL THE PERMANENT UNESCO THEMES, FROM THE PRESERVATION OF HISTORICAL ARCHITECTURAL TREASURES TO VIOLENCE AND NIHILISM IN THE WORLD ARE UP FOR DISCUSSION AT THE PARIS CONFERENCE, BUT ATTENTION IS FOCUSSED THIS YEAR UPON PROBLEMS CONNNECTED WITH THE SPREAD OF INFORMATION THROUGH PRESS, RADIO AND TELEVISION, OR THE "MEDIA", AS THEY ARE COMMONLY REFERRED TO.

THESE ISSUES HAVE LONG BEEN SENSITIVE BECAUSE THEY RAISE THE PROBLEM OF STATE CONTROL OVER MEDIA, ABHORRED IN MOST

WESTERN NATIONS AND A GOLDEN RULE IN COMMUNIST AND IN SOME DEVELOPING NATIONS.

SOME IDEA OF HOW DEEP THE CLEAVAGE IS OVER THIS ISSUE CAN BE GATHERED FROM THE FACT THAT A DRAFT DECLARATION ON KEEPING WAR PROPAGANDA AND RACISM OUT OF THE MEDIA, IN THE WORKS FOR THE LAST EIGHT YEARS, HAS NOT YET BEEN APPROVED BY ALL PARTICIPANTS.

THE ISSUE OF STATE CONTROL REMAINS CENTRAL TO THE DEBATE. A FORMER DRAFT DECLARATION, WHICH WESTERN NATIONS FELT MIGHT BE USED TO JUSTIFY A SPREAD OF STATE CONTROL WAS REVISED BY UNESCO EXPERTS, IN CONSULTATION WITH MEDIA LEADERS. UNESCO INFORMATION DIRECTOR LEON DAVICO SAID SOME STATES HAVE ALREADY SUBMITTED AMENDMENTS TO THE REVISED VERSION.

IN THE SAME LINE OF BUSINESS, A DEBATE IS SCHEDULED ON AN INTERIM REPORT PREPARED BY A UNESCO-SPONSORED INTERNATIONAL PANEL UNDER IRELAND'S FORMER FOREIGN MINISTER, NOBEL PEACE PRIZE-WINNER SEAN MACBRIDE. THE PANEL'S AIM IS TO SEEK WAYS OF CORRECTING THE IMBALANCE BETWEEN THE LARGE WESTERN NEWS AGENCIES WITH THEIR POWERFUL TECHNICAL EQUIPMENT AND LARGE STAFFS AND THE MORE RECENTLY ESTABLISHED AND LESS AFFLUENT NEWS MEDIA OF THE DEVELOPING NATIONS.

IT IS AGREED THE IMBALANCE CAN ONLY BE CORRECTED THROUGH AID TO THE DEVELOPING COUNTRIES IN BUILDING SUITABLE COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY AND IN TRAINING MORE JOURNALISTS. BUT HERE AGAIN THE ISSUE OF PRESS FREEDOM FROM GOVERNMENTAL CENSORSHIP OR INFLUENCE IS A CENTRAL THEME.

THE CONTRAST BETWEEN A GOVERNMENT HANDOUT AND WHAT IN THE WEST IS CONSIDERED THE JOB OF PROFESSIONAL JOURNALISTS IS A KEY FACTOR IN DISCUSSIONS ON WHAT UNESCO CALLS "THE NEW INTERNATIONAL COMMUNICATIONS ORDER."

GH/RD